

# **Classical Chinese Medicine in Community Health with a Focus on Self-Care: Participant, Staff and Practitioner Perspectives on a Pilot Program**

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Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of

**Masters of Health Services (Research)**

under the supervision of Dr Amie Steel, Dr Jon Wardle

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## Certificate of Original Authorship

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I, Alaia Harvie, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Health Services (Honours) Thesis, in the Faculty of Health, at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Signature of Student

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## Statement of author contributions to jointly authored works contained in this thesis

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This thesis contains three articles, presented in Chapters 2, 4 and 5, which have been written in joint authorship and accepted for publication in peer-reviewed journals. For all of these papers, I have been primarily responsible for the development of the research question; data analysis and/or synthesis; and drafting the manuscript and subsequent revisions. Support in all these areas was provided by Dr Amie Steel. Further support and feedback was provided by Dr Jon Wardle.

## Published works by the author incorporated into the thesis

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Of the drafted manuscripts presented in this thesis, all have been submitted and accepted for publication. The manuscripts contained in this thesis are as follows:

1. Harvie A, Steel A, Wardle J. Traditional Chinese Medicine Self-Care and Lifestyle Medicine Outside of Asia: A Systematic Literature Review. *J Altern Complementary Med* 2019; **25**(8): 789-808
2. Harvie, A, Steel, A & Wardle, J. Classical Chinese medicine self-care: Participants' perspectives on a pilot program for community health. *EurJIM* 2020; Aug; 37
3. Harvie A, Steel A, Wardle J. A qualitative study of classical Chinese medicine in community health focusing on self-care: practitioner and staff perspectives. *Integrative medicine research* 2020; **9**(1): 42-7

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## Abstract

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**Introduction:** This thesis examines the experience of participants, staff and practitioners of a community-health program based on the concepts of classical Chinese medicine (CCM), delivered in rural Scotland. The classical texts of Chinese medicine highlight the primary importance of lifestyle recommendations and self-care techniques for illness prevention and health maintenance. Such recommendations include aligning daily activities with cycles observed in the natural environment and adopting moderation and balance in relation to: exercise and resting periods, dietary intake, alcohol consumption and emotional outlook. This advice reflects concepts incorporated into many traditional cultures and aligns with contemporary World Health Organisation guidelines developed in response to the global rise in chronic and lifestyle illness. The potential application of CCM concepts as a core intervention to enhance community health outcomes and contribute to health behaviour change has been largely unevaluated in a Western context. **Methods:** A CCM community health program delivered in rural Scotland was evaluated using qualitative methods. Eighteen in-depth, semi-structured, interviews were conducted with program participants (n=11), staff and practitioners (n=7). A Framework Approach was applied in the analysis of the two sub-samples separately to derive emergent themes. **Results:** Themes were identified from the program participant data in four key areas: *Improvements in health and self-awareness; Self-direction, adaptability and prior exposure; Personalised support, self-reflective tools, sustaining engagement; and Cultural barriers, accessibility and strengthening networks.* Themes derived from the staff and practitioner interviews were: *Cultural challenges within the local region; Integration with the existing local health care network; and Team dynamics, co-creation and communication integrity.* Central to topics from both samples were issues of cultural alignment; consistency, clarity and professionalism of communication; connection and networking; balanced team dynamics; and the alignment of timelines and resources to project scope. **Conclusion:** This thesis presents the first known evaluation of a CCM community health program that teaches practical daily skills for illness prevention and health maintenance within a whole system of care and delivered in a Western setting. The study findings highlight the potential for further investigation of the application of CCM lifestyle measures to improve health outcomes and the teaching of CCM concepts as a method for

enhancing patient self-efficacy and supporting health behaviour change.

Recommendations drawn from the study for future similar projects include: further integration of complementary programs with the existing dominant health care system; consideration of cultural alignment relative to the local populace; and the need for secure funding streams when designing community health initiatives.